

To all ORS Staff

Below is a very special message that includes news about the acting Director, ORS, other ORS leadership positions, and important organizational developments within ORS.

Due to my retirement date being imminent, this will likely be the last "issue" of the News from the Director that I will send out. However, I fully expect this communiqué to be continued as ORS goes forward.

Thank you very much for your support, and for all that you do.

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NEWS from the ORS Director

February 5, 2004

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Acting Director, ORS

I recently sent a message to all of you announcing my retirement effective March 1, 2004. I must admit that it is difficult to find the words to express all that I feel, but I am surely very grateful for having had the opportunity for a wonderfully rewarding career serving the NIH. Going forward, I believe the Office of Research Services is well positioned to continue its commitment to excellence and to be responsive to the needs of the NIH community. Upon my retirement, Ms. Shirl Eller, currently the ORS Associate Director for Program and Employee Services, will assume the role as Acting Director, ORS. Mr. Arturo Giron, currently the ORS Associate Director for Security and Emergency Response, will be Officially Designated as the NIH Chief Security Officer. In carrying-out this work-sharing arrangement, your continued support is sincerely appreciated as ORS progresses through this transition period.

Director, Office of Administrative Management

I have completed the recruitment for the position of Director, OAM. I am very pleased to announce that Mr. Rich Southers is the new Director for this important ORS Office. As the Director, OAM, Rich will also serve as the Executive Officer representing both ORS and ORF within the NIH business community. The ORS/OAM is the focal point for the Shared Administrative Services Center (SASC).

Under this model, SASC supports both the ORS and ORF. Within the OAM are the following service functions: general administration, workforce planning and development, customer and employee information and communications, and general administrative policies and procedures. The Director, OAM, also serves on the NIH Competitive Sourcing Steering Committee and provides guidance and oversight of competitive sourcing activities for ORS and ORF. In addition, other shared service functions including budget and finance, IT, ethics, performance management, and EEO are carried out by other ORS Offices.

Update: ORS Shared Administrative Services Center (SASC)

The ORS working group has completed its study of consolidating general administrative support within ORS and for ORFDO into one organization. The need for this consolidation is driven by two major factors. The first is that this is the most effective and efficient utilization of ORS human resources to meet the general administrative requirements of the new ORS following de-layering and restructuring, which created 22 Divisions and Offices, not to mention the creation of the new Office of Research Facilities Development and Operations (simply referred to as ORF). The ORS Divisions are grouped by “service clusters,” and these are: Scientific Resources; Security and Emergency Response; and Program and Employee Services. The new SASC will be organized within the Administrative Services Branch of the OAM, and consist of five teams to support the ORS Office of the Director, the three service clusters, and the ORF. The other factor driving the consolidation is the Department’s initiative to consolidate administrative functions and reduce FTEs. NIH is in the process of trying to decrease the number of administrative positions at the NIH, making it all the more important for ORS to more efficiently deploy our administrative staff and resources.

All teams within the SASC will be multi-functional, providing the full range of administrative support to the assigned service area. In addition, each team will also have lead responsibility for one or more of the central core functions: travel, training, timekeeping, property management and HR actions.

Staffing for the new Administrative Services Branch will begin with the selection of the Branch Chief/ASB Manager position. This vacancy has been advertised and I hope to announce a selection soon. After that selection is made, the team leader positions will be staffed next, and then finally the team members’ positions will be advertised.

Office of Management Analysis and Review

I am pleased to announce the former Management Analysis and Review Branch will soon be the Office of Management Analysis and Review (OMAR). OMAR will reside within the Office of the Director and continue to advise staff on FOIA and ethics issues. In addition, OMAR will advise the ORS Director and staff on management and organizational practices; consult on general policies, procedures and delegations of authority; and review reports and papers. In addition, this office will serve as staff to the Director, ORS and will: 1) provide support to the new ORS governance committees, the ORS Executive Board and the ORS Management Council; 2) support the ORS Advisory Committee; and 3) the Director, OMAR will also serve as program coordinator/special assistant to the ORS Director.

ORS Space Coordinator and Transition Manager

With all the changes that have taken place within ORS and the formation of the new ORF, there is a compelling need for someone to serve as ombudsperson to keep track of issues and people being affected by these changes, and to coordinate all the space changes, space utilization, and strategic space planning for the ORS. I am very pleased to announce that Mr. George Mendez will serve in the Office of the Director, ORS, in carrying out this important role. There will be more information about George's role and responsibilities under a separate communiqué, and he will be talking to the ORS Management Council about this as well.

Division of Travel and Transportation Management

This new ORS Division is responsible for management of the NIH Travel Services Contract, and management of the NIH Parking and Shuttle Services that include TRANSHARE and the functions carried out by the Employee Transportation Services Office such as parking permits and RideShare. We are currently recruiting for the Director of this division and I hope to be able to complete the selection process within the next several weeks.

Division of Library Services Responsibilities to Expand

The transfer of the Parklawn Health Library to the ORS Division of Library Services is moving ahead. A Memorandum of Understanding between ORS and the Department's Program Support Center (PSC) has been signed, finalizing the agreement to transfer this function to the NIH Library within the ORS. The reorganization package, including the Secretary's 'official' signature, is all that remains. Currently there are four federal employees on staff at the Parklawn Health Library. Recruitment will get underway for four additional information specialist/librarian positions as soon as the transfer is complete.

Personnel Security

The NIH Office of Human Resources is transferring the responsibility of managing and administering the personnel security and suitability functions for the NIH to ORS. In order to carry out this responsibility, the ORS has proposed to the NIH leadership a new Division of Access Control and Personnel Security that will fall within the Security and Emergency Response cluster of services. This new division will have the responsibility of ensuring that the background of all employees is properly investigated prior to being allowed access to sensitive materials, facilities, and information at all NIH facilities. The level and degree of background investigation will correspond with the related risk and compliance with federal and departmental guidelines and regulations. Additionally, the Division will manage and control access to NIH facilities and sensitive areas by providing all employees, visitors, guests, and contractors with an appropriate form of identification.

ORS has briefed the ORS Advisory Committee, the NIH Deputy Director for Management, and more recently, the NIH Deputy Director, Dr. Raynard Kington, on the functional requirements for personnel security and presented the program proposal. The next step is to take this proposal to the NIH Intramural Activities Working Group so that the NIH governance bodies can consider the best method for resourcing this important function. The ORS will be recruiting for new positions in this organization once the transfer is complete. Some positions will be inherently governmental; contractors will fill others until we can train people to assume the responsibilities.

ORS FTE Ceiling, Recruitments, and Promotions

Recently the ORS was given an FTE ceiling for FY04. All Divisions and Offices were given targets. The program areas are expected to manage within these targets, and Rich Southers, OAM Director and ORS Executive Officer, will be reporting on FTE utilization to the ORS Executive Board and Management Council on a quarterly basis. All recruitments will need the signature of the Executive Officer to help ensure the NIH HR office can handle these in the most expeditious fashion. Recruitments and promotions are also still subject to NIH and Department restrictions that continue to change. If you have any questions or need help with this, please contact Rich Southers or Leslie Herbert

In Closing.....

As you have by now no doubt concluded, there is quite a bit going on within ORS and the rest of NIH for that matter. In reflecting on the past year, I am very proud that the ORS continues to perform at the highest levels, abiding by sound business and management principles, striving to meet the management agenda that has been put before us, and never losing sight of the importance of its people, for that is the fundamental basis of any successful organization. I have thought about all that we have accomplished. While it is not practical to list all the accomplishments here, I think it is important to reflect on at least some, each indicative of the dedication of ORS employees in wanting to improve the very special NIH research environment and the quality of worklife for employees. Many of your accomplishments have received recognition in awards ceremonies, publications and other venues. I want to highlight a few that come to mind that might not have received the recognition they deserve:

- Completed major organizational restructuring of ORS
- Established the NIH Security Program, codified under the Signature of the Director, NIH
- Preparation and recovery prior to, during and after Hurricane Isabel
- Negotiation of NIH-wide performance based Laboratory Animal Resource Contract (LARC)
- A continuation of the increased access to resources across the HHS through the Library Consortium
- Veterinary Resource's Mouse Phenotyping initiative and the valuable service to NIH researchers
- Completion of the fifth year of the Biomedical Engineering Summer Internship Program (BESIP)
- Passing the CDC Select Agent Inspection with 'flying colors'
- Renewal of all three USNRC licenses for terms of 10 years
- Recognition of the NIH as a "Best Workplace for Commuters" by a coalition of organizations within the Washington DC metropolitan area

So, in closing, for all that you do, I extend my congratulations, and on behalf of the entire NIH community, my sincere appreciation.



Stephen A. Ficca, Director
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